



Travels through time

Aruba's museums reflect the lifetime passions of ardent collectors, historians and archaeologists.

Almost fifty years ago, when the late Mario Odor was gardening in his yard, he came upon his first coin dating back to the late 18th century. Today, his collection housed at the Museo Numismatico has grown to more than 33,000 different coins and currencies dating back as far as 400 BC. Housed in an authentic cunucu house that was moved from the main street, the museum boasts showcases filled with coins primitive and strange, proof, counter-stamped, center-holed, scalloped, square, wooden, and over-struck, as well as errors, commemoratives, tokens and food coupons. Peruse the means of exchange of the Roman Empire, Chinese dynasties, India and feudal European countries as well as money unique in shape and material. Explore well-organized collections with informative commentaries.

Step into history in the modest Odor family home a few minutes drive from Queen Beatrix International Airport to visit the Museo di

Antigüedad. Within its walls are found countless treasures of Aruba's past and its family-centered way of life. Meander through an aloe garden, a kitchen with a clay hearth and antique utensils, a sitting room with velvet upholstery and hardwood cabinets. There are family heirlooms, an antique iron collection, sewing machines, tapes, tries, oil lamps, water jugs, vases, china and even a hope chest. The late Mario Odor scoured the Aruban countryside for four decades, finding artifacts that span the millennia, including fossils from the period when Aruba was still underwater. From the north side, he found Indian shell artifacts, pendants, belts, beads, clay pots and stone knives. His European pipe collection dates back to the first encounters between European settlers and Indians.

In 1981, the Aruban government opened the Museo Archeologico to exhibit a national collection of Indian artifacts. Located in a charming complex behind the Church of San Francisco in Oranjestad, it consists of more than 200 objects including shell, stone and ceramics from villages, places of burial and workshops found at 155 documented archaeological sites on Aruba. An era starting 4500 years ago and lasting until the end

large smelting works was built in Bushiribana, followed by another site twenty-five years later in Balashi. When World War I broke out in 1916, the mining of gold ceased for lack of materials required to purify the ores.

East. In a matter of about fifty years, the population of the island experienced a seven-fold increase, from about 9,000 in 1924 to about 60,000 in 1972. There were more than 8000 employees at its peak in 1949, but over the



The city of San Nicolas, named after Shon Nicolaas van der Biest, a former landowner there, came into existence with phosphate mining in 1879; until 1914, Aruba exported the raw material which ultimately was treated and used as an artificial fertilizer. Other commercial endeavors have included the breeding of cochineal, a cactus insect that when dried and ground produces a coloring agent; watapana tree pods which contained tannin; minor cultivations of silkworms, tobacco, cotton and peanuts; and most importantly, aloe and oil refining.

At the beginning of twentieth century, one-third of the island was covered with aloe plantations and the island's economy was largely dependent on it. At first, the harvest of aloe vera was only for the export of the raw material for laxatives. With clay moisture-retentive soil yielding a product of superior quality, Aruba became the largest exporter of aloe in the world. At the end of the 1950s, interest was redirected to the gel and its concentrates for use in cosmetic, hair and skin care products.

The Lago Oil and Transport Company Ltd was established in 1924, due to Aruba's favorable geographical position and peaceful political climate. Thousands immigrated from the British and Dutch islands, the population grew and other types of commercial enterprises attracted merchants from eastern Europe and the Near



years, the numbers decreased drastically with the advent of automation and the practice of hiring sub-contractors. With an end to Venezuela's preferential pricing, decreased demand, and competition with modern technology, the refinery closed down in 1985.

The silver lining of this dark cloud has been the development of tourism. Over the past two decades, Aruba has become one of the most sought-after vacation destinations in the world. A stable government, safe environment, good weather all year-round, location out of the hurricane belt, convenient airlift, magnificent beaches, and most of all, its multi-lingual, friendly, and service-oriented population, continue to attract hundreds of thousands of tourists annually, most of whom hail from the northeastern United States.

of the 19th century is described and documented, coming to life through fascinating archaeological finds.

The oldest burial sites have been found at Canashito in the center of Aruba. Artifacts found in the 1989 excavation of an Indian cemetery in Malmok date back from 450-990 AD where family members were buried according to strict rules of

The interior of the Museo Numismatico



posture and position. Unique artifacts from the Ceramic period include sling stones used as weapons, a small human figurine and perforated shell disks used as adornments as well as for monetary value. Skeletons, grave gifts and burial urns are displayed, as are glass beads, shards and other objects dating back to the 16th century. The 1991 excavation at Santa Cruz that produced remnants of the wooden house posts, group burial sites and a variety of artifacts sheds light on the Indian way of life. "One skeleton give us enough work for three or four years!" states Dr. Raymundo Dijkhoff, Aruba's first archaeologist, now engaged in a three-million-dollar museum project.

Providing visitors with an insight into the Bible and its use on Aruba, the varied collection at the Drs. A. van den Doel Bible Museum contains historic bibles in Dutch and other languages. There is an edition of the Septuagint used by early church fathers and a few Hebrew editions. In addition to train videos, a play-table, and choo-chooing



Above: Fort Zoutman tower and Museo Historico

trains in action, a large collection of model trains at the Model Trains Museum in San Nicolas provides an interesting overview of train traffic dating back to 1875.

Aruba's economy was once dependent upon aloe, with one-third of its land covered by plantations. The Aloe Museum located at the Hato Plantation that dates back to 1890 is a national depository for ancient aloe tools and equipment with a complete library on the history, manufacture and qualities of aloe vera. The story of aloe is told on a tour of the modern state-of-the-art aloe factory.

The Museo Historico is proudly positioned between two of Aruba's oldest monuments, Fort Zoutman and the Willem III Tower. The collection consists of artifacts acquired since its opening in 1983. There are audio-visual programs on various topics related to Aruba's history and a permanent exhibition outlining main events in Aruban history. Smaller, themed exhibitions are on periodic display. If visiting the museum on a Tuesday, stay in town for the Bon Bini Festival.

Francisco Chirino is the founder of the Museo di Deporte (Sports Museum), dedicated to the achievements of Aruban and international athletes past and present. His goal is to inspire and inform a new generation of athletes. This small museum displays 29 different sports and a collection of almost 2000 pieces of local and international memorabilia, including pins, scrapbooks, photos, trophies, uniforms, and certificates. A wealth of information about U.S. Baseball Hall of Fame stars is also included.

Among a proud roster of Aruban athletes are the RCA soccer team that won championships forty times in its seventy years of existence; Evelyn Farrel, the first woman and Aruban to participate in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 in the 100-meter event.



An Indian artifact unearthed by archaeologists

A Special mix of Entertainment and Culture

The Experience Aruba Panorama is an inspiring 22-minute film that gives you not only an awesome bird's-eye view of the island but also insight into its turbulent history and multi-cultural heritage. Trace Aruba's development from a land of peaceful Indian habitation to a pawn of colonial powers to its emergence as a world-class tourism destination. Shown daily every hour on the hour, this memorable film is projected on five large screens in the Crystal Theatre of the Renaissance Aruba Resort.

For those who would like to experience more of Aruba's music, a unique Musical Morning takes place on the last Sunday of every month from 11am - 1pm at the French Steak House at the Manchebo Beach Resort. Local musical artists provide entertaining performances of jazz, classical, folkloric and classic Antillean music. There is no charge for this delightful event, though donations are accepted for the Aruban Foundation for Musical Talent, assisting local



The courtyard of Fort Zoutman

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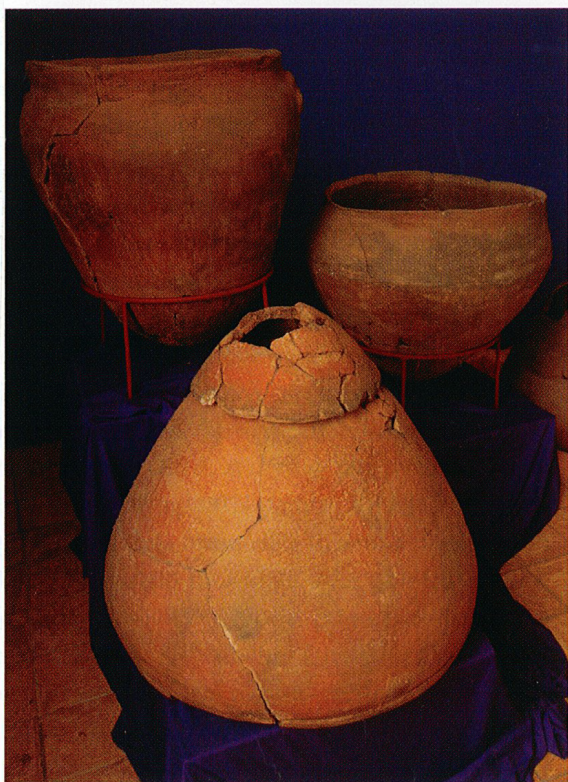


The courtyard of Fort Zoutman

The **Bon Bini Festival** takes place every Tuesday at 6:30 pm in the outdoor courtyard of historical Fort Zoutman. An engaging emcee introduces traditionally-costumed folkloric dancers, local musical genres such as the mazurka and the waltz, and instruments such as the *cuarta* (four-stringed rhythmic guitar), *wiri*, *raspu*, and *caja di orgel*, affectionately called the "ting-a-ling box". Originally from Italy and first made on Aruba in 1938, this barrel organ is a cylinder of a few thousand nails spaced at various heights and distances apart and plays different songs with the turn of a handle. The rhythmic music of the steel pan, originally developed in the English Caribbean from oil drums, also adds a touch of local color. The works of talented artists and artisans are on sale as are authentic culinary specialties.

Check with your hotel concierge or front desk for cultural events happening during your stay which may include dance festivals, international musical performers in concert, art shows, book fairs and more.

Ceramic pots have withstood the test of time



Museo Numismatico

Next to central bus station, Oranjestad

☎ 582-8831 / 🌐 www.museumaruba.org

Open Monday thru Friday, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Museo di Antiguedad

Timbalstraat 11, Dakota, near airport

Open by appointment only

☎ 582-8831

✉ daisy4croes@hotmail.com

Museo Archeologico

J. Irausquinplein 2-A, Oranjestad

☎ 582-8979/ 588-9961

✉ archo@setarnet.aw

Open Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 12:00 noon

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Drs. A. van den Doel Museum

Wilhelminastraat 1, Oranjestad

☎ 582-1431

✉ bstigter@setarnet.aw

By appointment only

Model Trains Museum

Koolbaaibergstraat 12, San Nicolas

(on the way to Seroe Colorado)

Tuesday thru Saturday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Open Sunday December – April

☎/☎ 584-7321

Museo Historico

Fort Zoutman, Oranjestad

Monday thru Friday 9:00 am – 12:00 noon

and 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

✉ museohistoricoarubano@hotmail.com

Aloe Museum

Pitastraat, Oranjestad

☎ 588-3222

🌐 www.arubaaloe.com

Monday thru Friday

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Tours 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Museo di Deporte

Alto Vista 67, Noord (on the way to Alto Vista Chapel)

☎ 587-2397 / ✉ gigis@setarnet.aw

Monday – Saturday 9:00 am – 12:00 noon and 5:00 pm

7:00 pm / Sundays 9:00 am – 12:30 pm